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## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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# MAKING and MAINTAINING A GOOD LAWN



M-1592 - A well kept lawn adds beauty to the home and is a source of pleasure to the family.



M-529 - To prepare the seedbed, begin with the subsoil. Spade, plow, or rototill the subsoil so it can be worked. If you rototill, follow by disking or raking. Remove all building debris and waste material from the soil before spading or tilling.



N-15682 - Level out uneven places with a hand rake, sloping the subsoil away from the house. For good surface drainage a grade of one foot in 50 linear feet is adequate. Do not work the soil when it is too wet.



N-15677 - Spread lime, if needed, and phosphate fertilizer over the subsoil before covering with top soil. Then rake topsoil evenly over the subsoil. If you buy additional top soil, be sure it is free of seeds or weeds or other undesirable plants. Work additional lime and fertilizer into topsoil, as needed.





27309-C - Sow grass seed by hand, as shown here, or with a mechanical seeder. To get uniform distribution, mix the seed with small amounts of topsoil or sand. Divide the seed mixture into two. Then sow one part in one direction across the lawn and the other half crosswise to the first sowing. Cover the seed lightly by hand raking or by dragging with a brush or mat. Then firm the seeded area by rolling.

Careful planning and building of a lawn will make its maintenance an easier and pleasanter task for the home owner, advise lawn specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Improved grasses, better knowledge of soils, and more efficient methods for control of insects, diseases, and weeds make it possible to have a good lawn in most parts of the United States. Researchers of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, a number of State Experiment Stations, and the U. S. Golf Association's Green Section have all contributed to these developments.

Essentials of making and maintaining a good lawn are: (1) preparing the soil thoroughly; (2) planting grasses adapted to your geographical area and your local conditions of sunshine and shade; (3) fertilizing adequately; (4) watering while grass is

N-15676 - Small plugs of sod or individual sprigs used in planting the newer hybrid strains of Bent grass and the Zoysia grasses, since these grasses not produce seed true to type. Plant the plugs of at measured intervals in prepared holes. Generally, plugs are set one foot apart, but they may be set closer for more rapid coverage. Tamp or heel the plugs in place and keep moist until established.

N-15365 - Sprinkle the new lawn planting every day until it is well established. Hold the hose in the hand to avoid excessive moisture. Once lawn grasses become established, avoid watering lightly at frequent intervals. Application of at least an inch of water at a time is then required to reach the grass roots where it can do the most good.

becoming established and during periods of drought; and (5) mowing to the right height during hot weather.

The time to start your lawn depends on the climate in which you live and the variety of grass you plant. Spring seeding is best for Bermuda, carpet grass, blue grama, and other grasses that grow well during hot weather. In general, early fall is best for seeding cool-season grasses (bluegrass, fescue, and bent grass). This gives the seedlings time to mature before they are subjected to summer heat, drought, and competition from weeds.

Some grasses, such as the Zoysias and the newer hybrid strains of Bermuda, do not produce seed true to type. These grasses, and all cool-season grasses in the early stages of growth, need fertilizer in the summer. Individual plants or sprigs, which grow most actively, are the best tool for applying fertilizer. They may be spot or plug sodded. Zoysia and Bermuda grasses may be



N-15363 - Adequate fertilizer, especially nitrogen, is required to maintain a fine healthy lawn. Fertilize bluegrass and other warm-season grasses in the summer, when growth is most active. This fertilizer spreader is a good tool for applying fertilizer.

sprigged or sodded during warm weather in spring or summer.

Select grasses or grass mixtures suited to your lawn conditions and to the amount of time and care you can give your lawn. Some grasses are more tolerant to shade and drought than others. Red fescue is a shade-tolerant grass. If you live in one of the regions where red fescue and Kentucky bluegrass will grow well, try a mixture of 75 percent red fescue and 25 percent bluegrass for the shady areas of your lawn. Reverse the percentage for the sunny areas.

However, avoid buying mixtures containing large quantities of annual grasses with perennial grasses. The faster growing annual grass may retard establishment of your permanent lawn.

For specific local recommendations as to selection of grasses, soil preparation, drainage, and other individual lawn problems, consult your county agricultural agent, your State experiment station, or your local nursery or landscape man. Here are a few regional suggestions:

**Northern Grass Belt:** Cool season grasses do best in the area from New England down to central Pennsylvania and in a belt extending from Pennsylvania to the West. There are, of course, other cool-season areas south of this belt in regions of higher elevation. Homeowners in the northern belt and other cool-season areas will do well to choose bluegrass, fine-leaf fescue, or one of the bent grasses, and should plant in September.

To get quality growth of these cool-season grasses, apply fertilizer at the rate of 3 to 5 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn each year. Use a little more than the 5-pound maximum for Merion bluegrass since it requires more plant food than other cool-season varieties to maintain good turf.



N-15362 - Spray your lawn with insecticide promptly when insects are numerous to avoid damage to your lawn. Insecticides are available in various formulations. Some must be mixed with water and may be applied with a garden-type sprayer, as shown here. Ready-to-use dusts and granules are applied with a hand duster or with a fertilizer spreader. Follow instructions on insecticide containers.



N-15336 - Spiking or aerating established lawns periodically permits better penetration of water and fertilizer needed for healthy growth of grasses. Machines to do this can be rented from equipment dealers or landscape gardeners, or you can have the work done on contract. Shown here is one type of aerating machine.

Mow common Kentucky bluegrass and the fescues no shorter than 1 1/2 inches. Merion bluegrass can be clipped a little more closely. Bentgrass requires close mowing.

**Moderate-Weather Belt:** This belt runs below the cool-season strip, extending from northern Tennessee and Arkansas directly to the West. Selection of suitable grasses in this region depends on individual preferences and on temperature and elevation. Some may prefer the cool-season kinds and some the warm-season grass such as Meyer Zoysia.

**Warm-Weather Belt:** The southern part of the country is largely a warm-weather region where Bermuda grass, the Zoysias, St. Augustine, carpet grass and other warm-season grasses grow best. Those who choose Zoysia or Bermuda will have to put up with limitations on their ability to stay green late in the season. However, these grasses will remain green longer in the warm areas than if grown farther north. Bermuda grass and Zoysia will thrive under close clipping.

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